

MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993

Between LinesTM

Patchwork Pride

Queer quilting as remembrance,
protest and connection

By Eryn Johnson Sunnolia

TRANSGENDER RESILIENCE

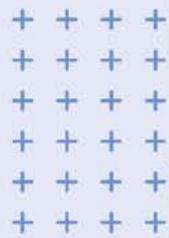
How a local org
will keep fighting

GEN Z'S WILD ELECTION RIDE

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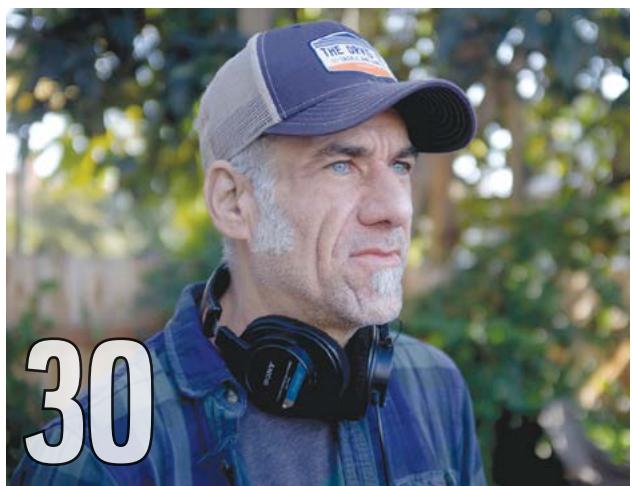
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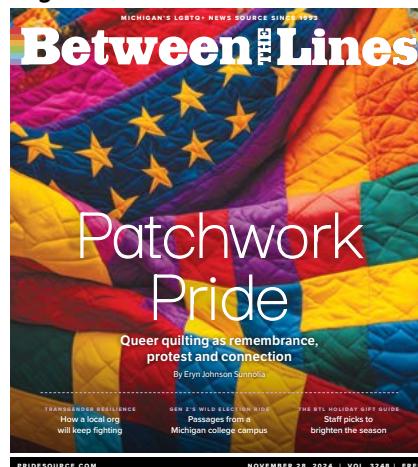
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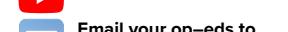
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5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY LIAM CLYMER

Trouble recuperating from Thanksgiving? We all know the holiday season can be stressful, especially when loud-mouthed family members may feel emboldened to let uncomfortable conversations fly following the recent election outcome.

But you don't have to let the lingering post-election hangover take over, friends. BTL has everything you need to have the most joyful and LGBTQ-friendly start to the season. You can go see a campy, queer holiday-themed play, attend a drag show, give back through an LGBTQ+ institution or learn more about expression through a poetry talk.

Instead of letting the tribulations of the season get you down, stand in defiance and enjoy the holiday season your way.



From "The E(xmas)ist" at The Ringwald Theatre. Photo: Brandy Joe Plambeck

Attend 'The E(xmas)ist'

You can't go wrong with holiday classics like "A Christmas Carol" or "The Nutcracker," but this year The Ringwald Theatre is whipping up something a little naughty and off the beaten path. Spooky season may be over, but the horrorfiles aren't done with all the campy goodness it has to offer. This holiday season, check out "The E(xmas)ist" — The Ringwald's holiday spin on the classic "Exorcist."

Director Brandy Joe Plambeck said that the show is unequivocally queer. "While the original story of a little girl possessed by a demon doesn't have many gay undertones, The Ringwald's production is soaked in queerness," Plambeck said. "My college roommate used to say, 'My goodness, that is queer as Christmas!' and I have thought that exact phrase about our production so many times. There are queer characters, played by queer actors, written and directed by queer artists. It is truly queer as Christmas!"

Dec. 6-22, times vary, inside Affirmations (290 W. 9 Mile, Ferndale). Ticketing and further information at www.theringwald.com/productions/exmasist.



Spark Creativity with Queer Crafting

The gays love a good craft, and nothing is going to stop them from making one. When Ypsilanti's Downtown Queer

Crafting Group faced closure at the downtown library, the group persevered, creating a temporary new home at the Riverside Arts Center. If you're looking to get out of the house to give yourself the space to create, look no further than this dedicated LGBTQ-inclusive community of crafters. The drop-in, bring-your-own-materials monthly meetups offer plenty of space to paint, work on fiber arts like sewing and knitting, dive into paper crafts, draw, write, or pursue many other artful creative pursuits in a welcoming environment.

Dec. 9 (and every first Monday of the month), 6-8 p.m., Riverside Arts Center (76 N. Huron St., Ypsilanti). More details at bit.ly/3V4nyWR.



Celebrate with 'The 12 Drags of Christmas'

Folks always say that winter is the season of giving — well, thank goodness, because Sabin and the 12 Drags Players are truly giving this holiday. Five15's "12 Drags of Christmas" is easily one of their most popular performances of the year, with lavish numbers, an all-star cast and, of course, holiday magic. The 7 p.m. show is already sold out, but there's still hope! Due to its popularity, Five15 is considering an additional performance at 10 p.m. — to ensure your spot, get on the waitlist now.

Dec. 7, 10 p.m., Five15 (600 Washington Ave., Royal Oak). Secure your spot at bit.ly/3UYSOqc.



Morgan Parker. Photo: morgan-parker.com

Learn From Poet Morgan Parker

Sex, gender and race are some of the themes in the poetry and writings of Morgan Parker ("Magical Negro," "Other People's Comfort Keeps Me Up at Night"). As a part of the Zell Visiting Writers Series, hosted by queer-owned Literati Bookstore, Parker will be stopping in Ann Arbor for a reading, Q&A and book signing on Dec. 5. Seats are first come, first serve, so get there early so you don't miss hearing from one of the strongest voices of a generation.

"The Zell Visiting Writers Series brings a variety of award-winning writers to Ann Arbor and invites not only students and faculty to attend but also the wider public," Helen Zell Writers Program Manager Julie Cadman-Kim said. "The program is designed to be inclusive of all readers."

Dec. 5, 5:30-6:30 p.m., Stern Auditorium (525 S. State Street, Ann Arbor). More information at bit.ly/3YRLgqq.



Nickki Stevens. Photo: Facebook/@nickki.stevens

Have a Night Out Supporting Gigi's Toys For Tots Event

Enjoy an evening out in a queer space while supporting a good cause.

Iconic gay club Gigi's Cabaret is holding a holiday toy drive hosted by local drag legend Nickki Stevens to give back to the greater Detroit community. In addition, there will be a 50/50 charity raffle raising funds for local women's abuse shelters in association with the Because It Matters Project. The event is set for Dec. 22, so there's plenty of time to fill up your Christmas sack with toys and gifts sure to delight local kids this holiday season.

Dec. 22, doors at 7 p.m., Gigi's (16920 W. Warren, Detroit). Updates on the event at bit.ly/4i0uOME.



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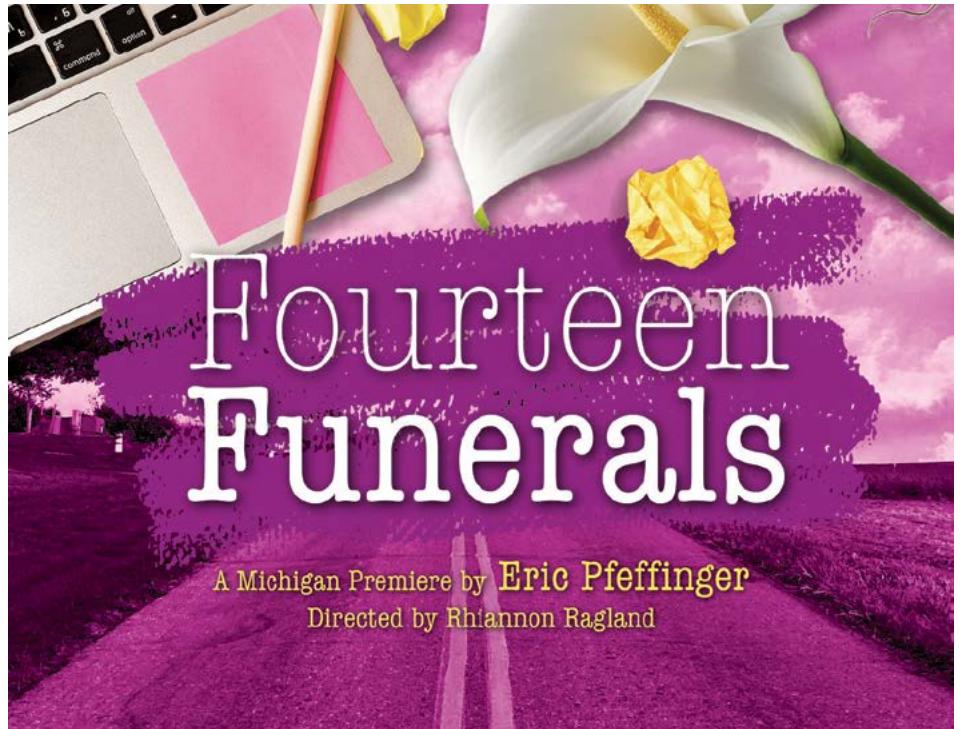
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Young Queer Michigan Voters Experience a Tumultuous Election on MSU Campus

How some of Michigan's youngest voting block fought (and lost) together

BY LIAM CLYMER

Young voters have the power to decide elections. So, on the days leading up to the general election, BTL spoke to voters on Michigan State University's campus to feel out what was on the minds of this large voting block.

Two days before election day

Forty-eight hours before election day, Kamala Harris was giving a rally on Michigan State University's campus. Long lines wound around steel barricades as students swiftly filed into Jenison Field House.

As landscape architecture fifth-year student Aaron Carten-Crandell made his way toward the building, he took in the energy of the smiling students and their cheers.

This was Carten-Crandell's first rally and he said he came out because the issues on the ballot were close to his heart. "The biggest [issue] I would say is, again, abortion as well as IVF," he said. "I grew up in a same-sex household, both my parents are lesbians and I was actually an IVF child. This is something very important and dear to my heart — that was the biggest decision of why I voted, and I've gone with Harris."

As a student looking at the end of his time at college, Carten-Crandell said Harris' stance on the economy was another key takeaway from the rally. "As someone who is about to start finding housing in Grand Rapids for my new job, new housing there, that's my top priority as well," he said. "Having inflation, living on my own and it's now starting to become a big deal for me."

Harris famously campaigned on her "opportunity economy" which included a comprehensive housing plan with downpayment assistance for new homeowners.

Election eve

Twenty-four hours before election day, MSU was buzzing with anticipation. Politically engaged students dotted every corner, handing out "Spartans for Harris" or "Kamala is brat" signs — campus canvassers were made up of mainly blue on-campus organizations or were paid by the Michigan Democrats; there was a notable lack of Republican canvassing.

At the Communication Arts and Sciences



MSU students line up for a Kamala Harris rally ahead of the Nov. 5 election. Photo: Aaron Carten-Caldwell

building, where early voting was taking place at the studio of WKAR Radio, a steady stream of students fulfilled their civic duty. The most contentious issue for most? MSU was out of the Michigan werewolf "I voted" sticker.

Election day

On the morning of election day, out bisexual Japanese freshman Emma Newman-Bale said that through the platform of equity Harris ran on, Americans, in terms of queer rights, abortion and healthcare especially, would "still have the ability to be who they want to be without the country telling them they can't be that way."

They added that they knew from the beginning that they were going to vote for Kamala. "You don't normally call a candidate by their first name, but with Kamala, I've seen clips of her encouraging other people to call her

Kamala because it puts her on the same level as us as a human being," Newman-Bale said. "Hearing stories of how she had to work hard, to get to where she's at, it's really comforting."

In the afternoon, out queer sophomore Sophia Catella agreed that Harris had put in clear work to connect with young LGBTQ+ voters. "I've seen a lot of TikToks and memes posted up around campus," she said. "I see a lot of Democratic volunteers, college students specifically, which I think is really cool. I haven't really seen a lot of that from the Trump campaign and I'm not actually sure if there's been anything going around on like reaching younger voters."

In the days after the election it would become clear that young white men were a key Demographic in swinging the vote to Trump in Michigan and across the nation.

Catella added that you didn't have to agree with every aspect of Harris' campaign to vote for her, if it provides a safer space to make

change within. "No matter what other third-party candidate you vote for, they're inevitably not going to win," she said. "It feels kind of counterproductive to me to make that choice instead of choosing someone you don't fully agree with, but would probably feel safer protesting under the presidential rule of."

And as the evening humidity gave way to rain, you could still find MSU students canvassing. Out queer and trans psychology junior Asterius Lenz was one of them.

Lenz said that "rights are on the chopping block," especially when it comes to abortion, IVF and trans healthcare, and that's what motivated him to canvas with For Michigan.

He also noted that Democratic leaders had been more open to having dialogues with young LGBTQ+ voters on the issues important to them. "This is what they're doing; they're

See **MSU Campus**, page 26

Finding Resilience Amid Election Uncertainty

Michigan's first out gay senator encourages 'tough conversations'



BY JEREMY MOSS

I know many people have genuine worries about their future and the future of our country following the recent election results.

The first election in which I could vote was 2004. That year, the majority of the Michigan voters banned same-sex unions in our state constitution. At just 18 years old, I wondered if I even had a future at all.

That's my lens from which I've viewed each successive election: Someone's future is on every ballot. And it's why I've centered my work in the Legislature on protecting voting rights, because voting rights can secure all other rights.

I, too, am worried about the impact of the election on the futures of women, people of color, religious minorities, immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community, our healthcare, our climate, Ukraine, the Middle East ... the list goes on. We could be facing crisis upon crisis.

So what's the path forward?

I take the same lessons from when I was 18 and apply them to now: You can't wait for anyone else to stand up for you. You have to stand up for yourself.

You've got to keep having tough conversations with your family, your neighbors, your co-workers — as Harvey Milk would say, where you shop and where you eat, for your sake and for their sake — about how the politics over the next two to four years will impact you personally.

Especially with the people who you think disagree with you.

I've served in some of the most hostile political environments, but I know I've made an impact — sometimes incremental, sometimes consequential — by speaking out as the youngest city councilman on a board of 80-year-olds and 90-year-olds, as a state representative in the Michigan House with a bigger Republican majority than they just won, as the first out gay senator (especially in a Senate run by Mike Shirkey, no less!), and as a public Jew in this hellish year of rising antisemitism.

There's a narrative emerging from this



election that we've become a country of selfish voters, but I've found that even people with the most hardened views still can find room for empathy for the plight of others if only they hear from you directly.

If enough of us are willing to stand up for ourselves, we can make a difference together.

And, as much as this election felt like a crushing defeat, we should not dismiss the wins we can celebrate. Around the country,

reproductive freedom proposals won in seven states, including Missouri and Montana. At home in Michigan, we elected Elissa Slotkin to the U.S. Senate and expanded a Democratic-nominated majority on our state Supreme Court.

Ultimately, one and a half percent separated the presidential candidates in Michigan, which is hardly a wholesale rejection of one political view or a full embrace of another.

I still hang onto a copy of Time Magazine from October 2017 with the cover story: "Democrats are in their worst shape since 1929. Can anything save them?"

Thirteen months later was the blue wave election. Democrats won the governor, secretary of state and attorney general offices in Michigan. We took back the U.S. House. We won the presidency in 2020. In 2022, our candidates flipped the state House and Senate and voters delivered a Democratic trifecta in Michigan for the first time in 40 years, where we spent a term making a real difference and improving the lives of families all throughout our state.

If I've learned anything in my time in office, it's that a year in politics is a lifetime. Yes, a year from now our country may look a lot different. But, a year after that on Election Day 2026, it could look a lot better if we work together to stand up for ourselves.

Sen. Jeremy Moss holds the distinction of having been the youngest-ever elected official on the Southfield City Council (2011) and has not let up on public service since. After City Council, he was elected to the Michigan House of Representatives, serving as the Democratic Caucus Whip, and then became the Assistant Democratic Leader in his first term in the Michigan Senate.

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Michigan's Transgender Unity Coalition Rises Up in the Age of Trump

Founder Bree Taylor on how her org will give hope to Michigan's trans community

BY ANNI ARBOUR

Editor's Note: The author is using a pseudonym for safety.

Despite the unseasonably balmy weather, a collective chill shivered through the Michigan transgender community on Nov. 6.

Bree Taylor had climbed atop a wooden picnic table in the courtyard of Vertex Coffee shop in Ypsilanti, looking like an orator from times past speaking to a crowd from a soapbox. It was the Saturday following the re-election of Donald J. Trump as President of the United States, and Taylor had quickly organized this meeting to address their fears.

"I expected seven people to show up. Instead, there were about 100. A whole bunch of concerned, scared and battered community members."

Taylor spoke to the assembly with the same directness that led her to advertise this meeting under the title of, "Well S—t, What Now?" She acknowledged their concerns and explained how the Republican's anti-transgender rhetoric was a "coordinated effort to scapegoat us as the problem. A new problem for our country."

She did not underplay her own worries about what the incoming administration may do. She expressed worries that gender-affirming treatment may be curtailed, that changing names on federal documents such as passports may become more difficult. She advised her audience to be proactive, to make changes to them now instead of waiting to see what happens after Trump takes office.

Mostly, though, Taylor wanted to assure her audience that she and Transgender Unity Coalition (TUC) were already responding to potential threats.

Taylor is executive director of TUC, which she founded earlier this year after moving to Michigan from the San Francisco area. Having lived in the queer-friendly environment of northern California her entire life, Taylor realized that not all American

trans people had that luxury and created TUC to fill that void.

While she found the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area generally tolerant of the local transgender community, she quickly saw that the state as a whole was more complicated. It is the purplest of states, swinging between Democratic and Republican depending upon the prevailing economic winds, and making it a coveted trophy in election years.

"Michigan is a great playground for our group to experiment. To see what works and what doesn't," she explained. She hopes that her group will "bleed into the red states," where transgender persecution is at its worst, and legislation has been passed to make trans lives unlivable.

It is easy to see why Taylor herself is the driving force behind TUC. A soft-spoken, unassuming young trans woman, she exhibits a contagious enthusiasm for her chosen mission that makes a listener want to immediately sign up and follow her lead.

Intensely intelligent, while speaking to Taylor, you can virtually see the wheels turning in her head. She listens intently, digesting the other person's words, then analyzing and cataloging them for future reference — attributes that serve her well in her day job as a biochemist.

Taylor self-effacingly describes her childhood as "unique." It began as tragedy, as her earliest memories are of watching her mother on her deathbed, dying of HIV. Two years old at the time and an only child, she spent her youth in foster homes. At age 24, Taylor moved to the Philippines for a year of self-exploration and "to get a bigger picture of the world."

Still not out as transgender, Taylor began working in bioscience. She eventually began looking elsewhere for employment in reaction to the cost of living in the Golden State, which led her to a similar position at similar pay in Ann Arbor.

Currently, TUC is still building its foundation. Organized as a 501(c)(4) non-profit, they suffer the

inevitable growing pains of limited funding and having only a small (but dedicated) coterie of unpaid volunteers. But Taylor's ambitions for the group belie its nascent status.

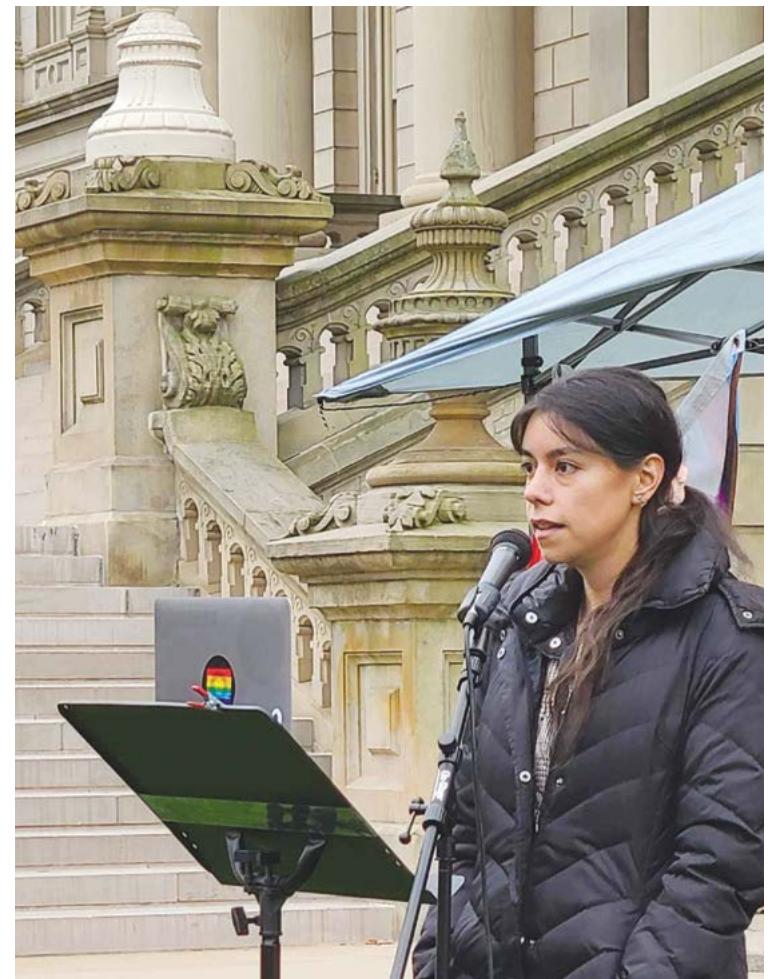
Taylor's ambitions for TUC are clear. True to her STEM background, one goal is to utilize scientific and medical research studies to combat misinformation about the transgender community. Such controversial reports as the Cass Review in Great Britain have been used to restrict the usage of puberty blockers in children in those nations. Taylor hopes to provide verifiable research in opposition to such flawed, but influential, arguments.

So too is the formation of a "trans-specific" railroad service. Similar in purpose to the existing "Rainbow Railroad," this transgender version would "give [a transgender person] an actual pursuit of a life" and move them from a discriminatory environment to a safer one. Once there, it would help them find lodging and employment.

Taylor also wants to establish a platform that highlights transgender artists, writers, poets and other forms of artistic expression. The benefits of this approach are both therapeutic and cathartic, providing mental healing and emotional release.

Finally, TUC is to have a video component, a forum on which to conduct casual interviews. These interviews could be with political allies, or simply average transgender people speaking about their personal lives. Taylor believes that one reason why the dehumanization of the transgender community exists is because many Americans do not see them as their neighbors, co-workers or relatives. Revealing, on-camera interviews would give cisgender Americans an opportunity to "see that [transgender people] are normal people."

Taylor also wants transgender individuals to benefit from her experience as a former EMT and learn CPR techniques. Already, Taylor is personally conducting classes at various partner locations



Transgender Unity Coalition Executive Director Bree Taylor speaks in Lansing. Courtesy photo

and would like to expand upon these sessions and provide training that could lead others to certification as an instructor. These classes are offered free of charge.

Currently, TUC's immediate priority is to push for the passage of four bills sitting in limbo in the Michigan House of Representatives. In a recent video posted to YouTube, Taylor explains the content of House Bills 5300-5303, which seek to make name and gender marker changing in the state easier. They have been unacted upon since February of this year. Taylor patiently explains the content of the bills and ends by making an earnest plea for viewers to contact their legislators to get them passed before the House majority changes parties in January 2025.

Going forward, Taylor plans to

designate Saturdays in November leading up to the annual Transgender Day of Remembrance on Nov. 20 as Transgender Lobby Days. On those days, Taylor requests that members of the transgender community, in every state, go to their state capitals and protest in favor of transgender rights.

Taylor expresses the hope of cooperation among the various non-profits working on behalf of the transgender community. Their shared goals make them stronger as a united front. And she is actively reaching out to both local and national allies to coordinate their efforts. An approach she sums up succinctly:

"It's not for me; it's for a greater purpose."

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House Republicans Take Strong Stand Against Illegal Urination

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI



U.S. Rep. Nancy Mace (R-South Carolina) is a fucking ghoul.

According to The New Civil Rights Movement, Mace has introduced "a binding resolution to ban transgender women from using women's restrooms in the House of Representatives, after Sarah McBride, a Democrat from Delaware, became the first openly transgender American to be elected to Congress."

In other words, Mace is pushing a resolution to single out and punish a single member of Congress simply for being trans. She wants one of this country's most powerful deliberative bodies to take up the issue of whether or not McBride will be allowed to pee at work.

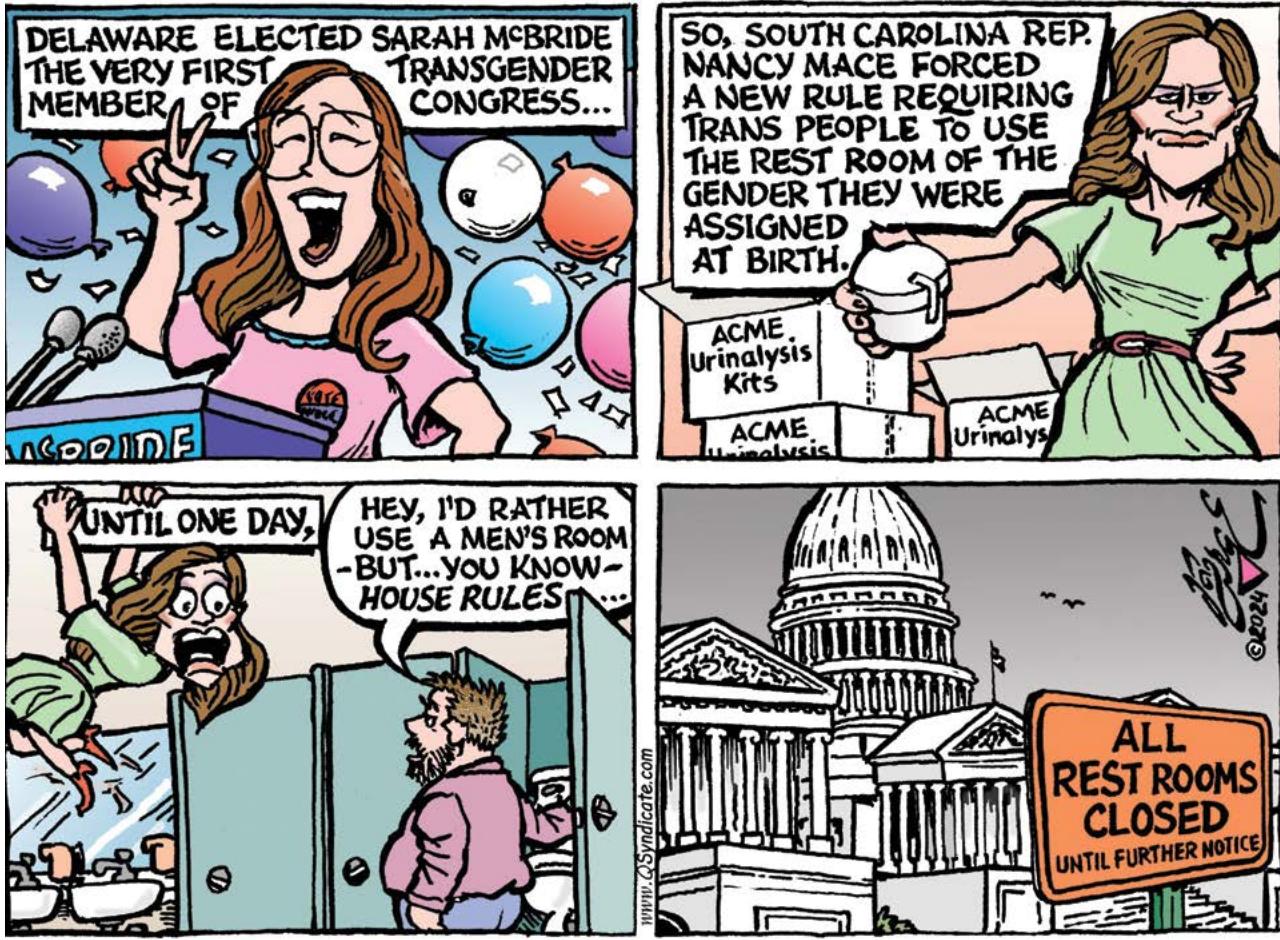
It seems laughable, but on X, Mace made it clear she's dead serious: "For the record, this is a binding resolution. The Sergeant at Arms would enforce it."

In other words, Mace wants the person responsible for overseeing safety and security at the Capitol to add "bathroom police" to their list of duties.

Whether or not McBride has a restroom she can use, the act of blocking trans people from public restrooms is intended only to ostracize them and further the false claim that they are sexual predators.

House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-Louisiana) is on board. "All single-sex facilities in the Capitol and House Office Buildings — such as restrooms, changing rooms, and locker rooms — are reserved for individuals of that biological sex," he said in a statement. "It is important to note that each Member office has its own private restroom, and unisex restrooms are available throughout the Capitol."

Oh, well, good. McBride can just use her own office's private restroom and make herself a map of all of the places in the Capitol where she can use the restroom when



she's outside of her office. Problem solved!

Just kidding. Whether or not McBride has a restroom she can use, the act of blocking trans people from public restrooms is intended only to ostracize them and further the false claim that they are sexual predators.

Needless to say, there have been some strong reactions to Mace's resolution.

"If a woman doesn't look 'woman' enough to a Republican, they want to be able to inspect her genitals to use a bathroom? It's disgusting, and everybody, no matter how you feel on this issue, should reject it completely," U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez told Spectrum News. "They're doing this so that Nancy Mace can make a buck and fundraise off an email. They're not doing this to protect people. They're endangering women, they're endangering girls of all kinds. And everybody should reject it. It's gross."

Ocasio-Cortez also posted on X: "Women know that men don't scheme

to 'dress like girls' to assault them. They do it every day in broad daylight. And the ones in power protect each other to keep it quiet. Just ask the House Ethics Committee. Or the President-elect of the United States. Leave women alone."

A response online to Ocasio-Cortez's comments really sums the whole thing up: "You obviously do not have a daughter. Do you want penises flying around a locker room with your daughter in there?" (I am purposefully not linking to this because this person doesn't deserve the

attention.)

Apparently this person thinks that penises can fly independently around a room, something that even I, a lesbian, know is not true.

For her part, McBride is responding with a level of civility that Republicans lack.

"I'm not here to fight about bathrooms," she said in a statement. "I'm here to fight for Delawareans and to bring down the costs facing families. Like all members, I will follow the rules outlined by Speaker Johnson, even if I disagree with them."

McBride went on to call the whole thing an "effort to distract from the real issues facing this country."

"Each of us were sent here because voters saw something in us that they value," McBride continued. "I have loved getting to see those qualities in the future colleagues that I've met and I look forward to seeing those qualities in every member come January. I hope all my colleagues will seek to do the same with me."

While Mace has tweeted hundreds of times about the trans bathroom ban, she used to say that she supported LGBTQ+ rights.

"I strongly support LGBTQ rights and equality," Mace told The Washington Examiner in 2021. "No one should be discriminated against."

No one, except Mace's only trans colleague. So much for her strong support.

Political strategist Adam Parkhomenko put it best on Bluesky with a reference to the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection: "It's really something to watch the Party whose supporters poop on the floor in the Capitol and wipe their feces on the wall tell us which bathrooms to use."

Welcome to the Republican-led shit show.

New Detroit LGBTQ+ Venue Arcenciel Opens

The recent grand opening of Arcenciel (pronounced ahr-ken-seel), an upscale LGBTQ+ venue offering fine dining and entertainment, is generating significant buzz among local influencers and community leaders who attended an exclusive VIP reception during its pre-opening celebrations Nov. 27.

The venue features five distinct spaces, including The Versailles Dining Room, The Rainbow Bar and The Magenta Lounge, The Sports Den and a European-inspired dance floor. The venue's name, French for "rainbow," reflects its commitment to creating a welcoming environment for the LGBTQ+ community while

maintaining the sophistication of a luxury establishment.

"Our pre-grand opening events were an incredible success, and we've been truly inspired by the positive feedback from our guests," Arcenciel Detroit General Manager Joey Ewick told BTL. "Our menu has been a standout, with guests praising the innovative and flavorful dishes created by our talented culinary team, which perfectly capture the essence of Arcenciel. We're beyond excited to officially open our doors and invite everyone to experience everything we have to offer, from exceptional food and drinks to the unique and vibrant ambiance of each of our spaces."

Arcenciel is located at 14925 Livernois, Detroit. Hours: Thurs.-Sat. 6 p.m.-2 a.m. (dining 6-9 p.m.). More info at arcencieldetroit.com.



A bartender prepares drinks at Arcenciel. Photo: Arcenciel Detroit

SCOTUS to Hear Landmark Case on Trans Youth Healthcare Ban

On Dec. 4, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear U.S. v. Skrmetti, a critical case on whether states can ban gender-affirming care for transgender youth. The appeal arises from Tennessee, where such a ban was upheld by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, which also covers Michigan, Ohio and Kentucky. The Sixth Circuit ruled 2-1 that the ban is constitutional, applying the lowest standard of review, "rational basis," despite plaintiffs' arguments for heightened scrutiny due to sex-based discrimination.

Representing the plaintiffs, ACLU attorney Chase Strangio, who worked on the landmark Obergefell v. Hodges same-sex marriage case, and the U.S. solicitor general argue the ban violates equal protection rights. Tennessee defends it as necessary to protect minors from potentially irreversible treatments. Oral arguments stream live at 10 a.m. EST on Dec. 4, with a decision expected by June 2025.



Observe World AIDS Day

Since 1988, the annual World AIDS Day observance, set for each Dec. 1, has shone light on the global AIDS pandemic and offers space for remembering and mourning those we have lost. While

the advent of drugs like PrEP, better treatment options and heightened awareness have led to a significant drop in AIDS mortality in the U.S., the observance still holds significant weight for our local community.

World AIDS Day events are scheduled throughout Michigan, including an observance in Ferndale hosted by Ferndale First United Methodist

Church and Oakland County Health Division. The Dec. 1 event, set for 5-7:30 p.m. at First United, will feature speakers from United HIV Health & Beyond, performances from Sing Out Detroit and Metropolitan Community Church of Detroit, a candlelight vigil, an AIDS Memorial Quilt Panel and light refreshments.

Find Us on Bluesky

Follow BTL and Pride Source on Bluesky — @pridesource.com! We're part of the many LGBTQ-inclusive organizations and media outlets who have left Twitter/X for the bluer pastures of this rapidly growing social network. You can still find us on Facebook (@pridesource) and Instagram (@pridesourcemedia).



Exhibit Serves 'Soft Serve'

Wasserman Projects kicked off its fall season with "Soft Serve," a bold two-person exhibit featuring legendary queer artist and costume designer Machine Dazzle and boundary-pushing sculptor Gracelee Lawrence. The show celebrates the fantastical power of Mother Nature through art. Machine's immersive installations are unapologetically extra, while Gracelee's playful 3D-printed works explore the deliciously complex connections between food, bodies and technology.

Through Dec. 14, Wasserman Projects (Eastern Market, Detroit). wassermanprojects.com for more info.

Is Glinda in the Closet?

"Wicked" star Ariana Grande told Gay Times she felt her character Glinda "might be a little in the closet" when it comes to how she feels about "Wicked" witch Elphaba, played by openly queer actor Cynthia Erivo. The iconic characters, Grande said, provide "truth and such a safe space for one another." The blockbuster brought in more than \$164 million on opening weekend, casting doubt on the trending "go woke/go broke" sentiment clogging up increasingly conservative Twitter/X for the past few weeks.



Ariana Grande. Photo: Universal Pictures.



Shine Bright, Shop Smart: How to Nail Your Jewelry Gift Game This Holiday Season

Tips for choosing the right pieces from Ferndale jeweler Joseph Shihadeh

BROUGHT TO YOU BY GIORGIO CONTI JEWELERS

There are reasons why jewelry is a top gift year after year: Jewelry is timeless, thoughtful and special. What's not to love?

But when money, infinite choices and

emotions are involved, the jewelry-buying process can sometimes feel daunting. Joseph Shihadeh, owner of Giorgio Conti Jewelers in Ferndale, knows this and wants to help make it a positive experience for local jewelry shoppers this holiday season and beyond.

"We understand that stepping into a jewelry

store can be intimidating, especially when making an emotional purchase," Shihadeh tells BTL.

Giorgio Conti Jewelers relocated to Ferndale at the beginning of this year, but has been in business for over 40 years. They are used to helping an influx of shoppers around the

holidays make the best decision for their price point and style needs, and have a few tips if you're in the market for a sparkly, special gift this season.

Timeless styles are a safe choice.

A great thing about gifting jewelry is that it's timeless and can fit within a variety of styles. But

that doesn't mean there aren't trends that come and go. Shihadeh says classic pieces, like tennis bracelets or solitaire pendants, are gifts that remain popular year after year. If you're unsure of a design for your loved one, something with a timeless look is a safe (but still sweet) move.

Or, consider working directly with a jeweler on custom pieces.

More unique pieces also make great gifts. Knowing your loved one well enough to understand their taste in jewelry makes the gift that much more meaningful, especially if you help design the piece.

Giorgio Conti offers custom pieces created right in their in-house design studio in Ferndale, which allows buyers to be involved in every step of the process. Before stepping into a jewelry store, though, make sure to pay attention to the pieces your loved one already owns and wears frequently, or where you notice a gap in their collection. Also, be sure to know their preferences for yellow or white gold, if they prefer diamonds or gemstones, and whether they like rings, necklaces, watches, bracelets, or earrings.

"If you're looking for more ideas or help with the design, one of our design ambassadors would be happy to assist you, too," says Shihadeh. "No job is too small or big to make the holiday feel special."

Be clear about your budget.

Shihadeh knows making a big jewelry purchase takes lots of planning — and money. He recommends coming in with a budget in mind so as not to overwhelm yourself with too many options.

"We offer a wide range of price points to help you find that special piece," he says.

When deciding on a budget, keep in mind the jewelry type, the kind of gemstone, whether or not the piece is custom, and if purchasing something with diamonds, whether they are lab-grown or earth-mined.

Think about bringing the recipient into the store with you.

You may be set on surprising your loved one with a beautiful piece to add to their jewelry box, but Shihadeh says bringing them into the store to try on jewelry could make the experience better for the two of you. Plus, it can save you time and money.

"You might have something in mind but at the end of the day, you really need to try things on and see what looks good on you," says Shihadeh. The same goes for when purchasing a gift for someone, he says.

"You can have tons of pictures of things that interest you but once you try it on, you might want to tweak a few things."

Make sure you are comfortable with your purchase...and experience.

Arguably the most important thing to consider while purchasing jewelry this holiday season (or any time) is that you're comfortable throughout the process. You don't want to feel pressured into buying something more

expensive than what you had planned, and you don't want to be talked into a piece that isn't what you're looking for.

This is why Shihadeh stresses the importance of visiting a jeweler who will listen to what you're looking for.

"As an LGBTQ- and family-owned business, we strive to create a personal atmosphere for everyone who visits. Jewelry is special, and it deserves to come with a memorable experience," he says. That experience, he adds, shouldn't be memorable for being stressful, intimidating or overwhelming.

Giorgio Conti Jewelers is focused on creating positive connections with their clients and the community. Though they only moved to Ferndale in January, they sponsored the Affirmations Gala, hosted a Pride party and are a chair and sponsor of the CARE Night Gala, which supports CARE House in Oakland County, a non-profit that serves children in need. Shihadeh says they are excited to host

“As an LGBTQ- and family-owned business, we strive to create a personal atmosphere for everyone who visits. Jewelry is special, and it deserves to come with a memorable experience. ”

— Joseph Shihadeh,
Giorgio Conti Jewelers

and assist with other upcoming events, too.

"We're committed to engaging with the community in diverse ways and supporting different causes," says Shihadeh. The jewelry shop owner says they also proudly support the arts and culture scene in Ferndale and Detroit.

Giorgio Conti wants everyone to feel welcomed while purchasing items that represent milestones, like engagements, anniversaries, birthdays and promotions, he says, including members of the LGBTQ+ community. "Michigan lacks jewelers that are part of — and engaging with — the LGBTQ+ community, so we are proud to fill that gap," he says.

This content is made possible through our partnership with Giorgio Conti Jewelers. Learn more about this LGBTQ-owned Ferndale business at gconti.com.



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SLEIGH THE HOLIDAYS

Staff Gift Picks for Every Name On Your List



Make Michigan memories with a gift of adventure

Experience classic queer Lake Michigan

There are many hotspots throughout Michigan that would make for a delightfully queer weekend getaway (and new ones on the rise), but, sometimes, it's good to reconnect with the classics, like a whirlwind adventure in the Saugatuck-Douglas region. Reserve a room at the always-hopping Dunes Resort in Douglas or nab an Airbnb gift card and encourage your gift recipient to book a cottage in this Lake Michigan queer mainstay, known for its vibrant arts community, coastal charm and a rich LGBTQ+ history that dates back to the '60s. You'll find plenty of restaurants and shops to round out a fun (or romantic) getaway for you and a dear member

of your chosen family.

Create a queer Michigan adventure on a budget

Feeling stretched in the money department this year? Just because you don't have the Benjamins to be purchasing entire weekends away for your bestie doesn't mean you have to mope at home or forgo gift-giving all together. Michigan is brimming with so many memorable, fun, free or almost-free activities that you'll wonder why people are out here spending so much money once you put together the best low-cost queer itinerary ever. Here are a few options to get you started:

- Queer Outdoors event (free or low-cost, queer-inclusive hikes, kayak trips, outdoor gatherings)
- A day exploring Ann Arbor and the totally free LGBTQ+ Walking Tour (grab a coffee at queer-owned Vertex Coffee Roasters)

- Explore queer art for free at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit or the Detroit Institute of Arts

Share the gift of reading

'True Gretch'

Every queer Michigander knows staunch LGBTQ+ ally Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, but few know the story behind her rise. From debate prep and social media presence to humble everyday interactions with constituents, readers are taken into the small moments that made Big Gretch the "joyful warrior" she is. The breezy read never overstays its welcome and leaves even the most apprehensive reader engaged. Delightful, witty and meaningful, "True Gretch" leaves readers with a renewed purpose and understanding of what political action is really about.

Delight your favorite queer bookworm

It's a win-win prospect. You have queer friends and loved ones who love to read, and Michigan is brimming with queer-owned bookstores. You could browse that uninspiring display of generic gift cards at your local big box retailer and grab another Amazon card, or you could branch out a little this year and support a vital community resource. Consider these queer-owned bookshops, who will keep reinvesting your dollars to make our community better:

- Literati Bookstore (Ann Arbor)
- 27th Letter Books (Detroit)
- Sidetrack Bookshop (Royal Oak)
- Wayfaring Booksellers (Lansing)
- Coy's Comics (Saginaw)

See **Gift Guide**, page 18



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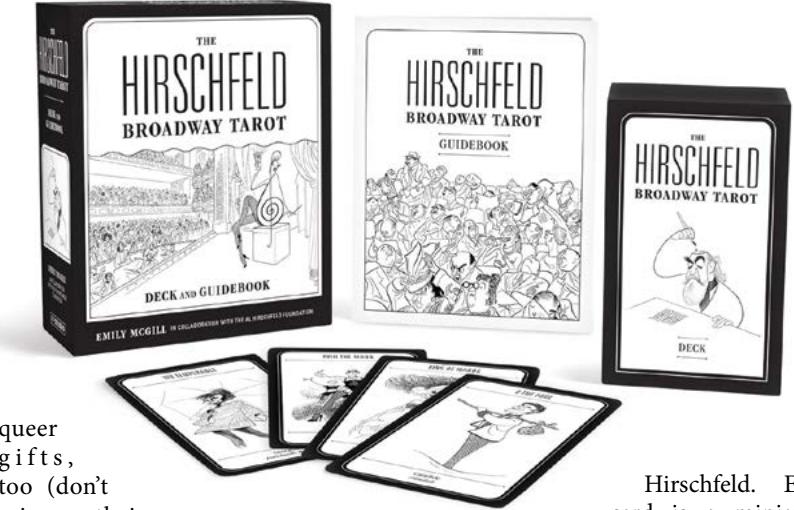
Continued from page 16

- Bettie's Pages (Lowell)
- Books & Mortar (Grand Rapids)

Unique queer oddities

'Breaking the Binary: A Queer Ecology Zine'

Honestly, at \$10 a pop, grab a few copies of this charming, subtly defiant, handcrafted zine and include them with multiple gifts this year (a PDF version is available for \$5). Stapled together in classic '90s zine style, "Breaking the Binary" includes 12 full-color, highly illustrated pages filled with research about queer ecology, a field combining traditional ecology and queer theory. Here, creator Madeline Priebe (@theartofmadeline) explores the inherent queerness of the nature that surrounds us, from same-sex behavior across various animal species to sex-changing plants. Priebe's Etsy store is packed with other quirky, handmade



queer gifts, too (don't miss their "Like Gravity: An Asexual History Zine.")

The Hirschfeld Broadway Tarot

If you've already gifted your friends the cat tarot cards, take it up a notch with the new Hirschfeld Broadway Tarot Deck and Guidebook. This isn't just another tarot set; it's a gorgeously unique blend of Broadway magic and spiritual insight, featuring the iconic illustrations of legendary cartoonist and gay activist

Al Hirschfeld. Each card is a miniature masterpiece, capturing the wit, elegance and theatrical flair that made Hirschfeld's art so beloved. Honestly, I've never been a tarot person myself — but now I'm hooked, thanks to how irresistibly stylish and imaginative this deck is. The combination of Hirschfeld's whimsical linework and the mysteries of tarot makes for an enchanting gift. Imagine the possibilities these cards could unlock for your recipient: Will 2025 not suck as hard as we think? Will your mystic-in-the-making rise above the chaos and uncertainty the world may throw its way? At the very least, this deck will

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spark reflection, inspiration and maybe even a little Broadway-style drama.

2024 Criterion Collection films

The Criterion Collection, renowned as the gold standard in film preservation and restoration, has long championed diversity in its offerings. For the queer physical media collector in your life (there is, of course, the option of a Criterion digital subscription as well), consider these standout 2024 titles that have joined the company's esteemed catalog.

One highlight is "Querelle" (1982), the daring collaboration between two

groundbreaking queer artists: director Rainer Werner Fassbinder and French novelist Jean Genet. This arousing tale explores gay desire through the stylized lens of Tom of Finland. It follows a Belgian sailor whose arrival in the port of Brest sparks passion, rivalry and violence.

For fans of sapphic cinema, "Bound" (1996), the lesbian neo-noir classic starring Jennifer Tilly and Gina Gershon, finally gets the deluxe 4K restoration it deserves. Directed by Lana and Lilly Wachowski, who would go on to helm "The Matrix" and come out as trans, the film resonates even more deeply through the lens of their personal and creative evolution.

For those invested in LGBTQ+ history, filmmaker Gregg Araki, one of the most influential voices in queer

cinema, has spent his career documenting the outsider experience with a rebellious, punk-rock sensibility. The Criterion release of **Gregg Araki's Teen Apocalypse Trilogy** is a treasure trove, compiling seminal works from his New Queer Cinema era, including "The Living End" (1992), "Totally F**ed Up" (1993), and "The Doom Generation" (1995). These films capture the angst, vibrancy and radical defiance of queer youth in the '90s, offering both a snapshot of the era and timeless reflections on identity, desire and survival. With meticulously restored visuals and new bonus features — including interviews, commentaries

See **Gift Guide**, page 20

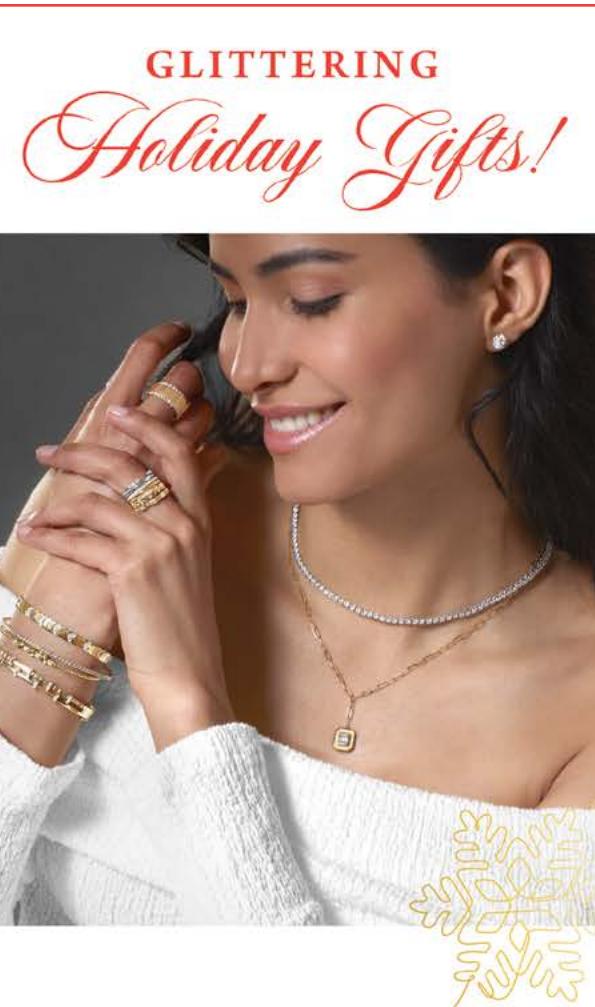
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and archival footage — the set is an essential addition to any cinephile's collection. Additionally, there is CC40, a box set celebrating 40 years of the Criterion Collection. Many films that have queer appeal, including "My Private Idaho," the Rock Hudson-starring "Seconds" and "Y tu mamá también," are among the set's whopping 40 titles.

'Sylvester: Live at the Opera House'

Unreleased until now, "Sylvester: Live at the Opera House" is the perfect Christmas gift for the vinyl-collecting club queer, not just because of the music itself but because of what Sylvester represented. Known as the "Queen of Disco," Sylvester was a trailblazing figure in the LGBTQ+ community, breaking barriers with his unapologetic embrace of queer identity, gender fluidity and feminine style during a time when such visibility was rare and courageous. In the vinyl's liner notes, Sylvester is described as the "central diva" whose performance at the San Francisco War Memorial Opera House in 1979 was "as unlikely as it was inevitable." This album isn't just music — it's a testament to queer pride, artistry and resistance. It's a gift just hearing his version of The Beatles' "Blackbird." In a world still demanding resilience, gifting this vinyl is a way to honor that spirit, celebrate identity and share the enduring power of an artist who



transformed culture with every note.

Custom paint by numbers

Looking for a gift that screams "sentimental and extra"? This one's for the crafty queens, hopeless romantics and DIY divas —

especially if your boo is one of them.

Custom, intricate, adult paint-by-numbers are having their moment this season, and this gift checks all the boxes: it's cute, creative and doubles as a date-night activity and chic home decor once you're done with your masterpiece. Maikoo Art offers the option to upload a couple's photo and have it made into a paint-by-numbers piece. The kit includes the brushes, paints and hardware to hang the art, along with the option to frame it.

See **Gift Guide**, page 34

Practical Gifts

'TERF Repellant' tote

What queer person doesn't have an influx of cute bags (but will never turn down another one)? With a spray bottle graphic that reads "TERF Repellent" ("100% effective," it notes—so it should work on J.K. Rowling), this bag will show that you're a safe space for people in your community. If you're more of a purse or wallet person, though, this shop has the same design on a shirt, an iron-on patch, a pin and more. It's also for a cause you can feel good about supporting as Rainbow & Co is a queer, autistic-owned shop that sells apparel, accessories, pins and flags, with 10% of sales each quarter going to LGBTQ+ organizations.

Craft mocktail gift set

Are you loving the mocktail menu at Uplift? After a long night spending lots of money there, why not go home and make your own? The Dry Goods Beverage Company carries a variety of mocktail mixers, ready-to-drink mocktails, NA spirits and NA wines. This gift set features five single-serving mixers to create your own mojito, salted paloma, hurricane, lemon drop and

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Gay Tidings We Bring: Palmer Woods Home Tour and Soirée Celebrates Queer Legacy in Style

How the super queer history of Palmer Woods contributed to its classic architectural beauty

BY LIAM CLYMER

Detroit's Palmer Woods neighborhood isn't just a showcase of architectural beauty — it's a living tapestry of history, where LGBTQ+ voices have not only enriched the community's cultural identity but also played a vital role in preserving its iconic landmarks. Every year, this vibrant legacy comes to life during the dazzling Holiday Home Tour and Soirée, drawing hundreds to celebrate the area's elegance and heritage.

The 2024 festivities will include opportunities to tour five of Palmer Woods' most elegant homes, showcasing the diverse architectural stylings found all in one neighborhood — of course, decked out with a bit of holiday flair.

Of course, as docents lead guests through the meticulously maintained time capsule that is Palmer Woods, they can't avoid the historical LGBTQ+ presence found in the area.

Tim Retzloff, LGBTQ+ studies professor and historian at Michigan State University, said the surrounding area became an LGBTQ+ hotspot in the early '70s. Following the Detroit uprising of 1967, there was a migration from what is now known as Midtown to the apartment district near Woodward and McNichols. Detroit's apartment offerings are different from that of other big cities, he explained.

"Detroit doesn't have a lot of

See [Palmer Woods](#), page 32



A home featured in the Palmer Woods Holiday Home Tour. Photo: [palmerwoods.org](#)

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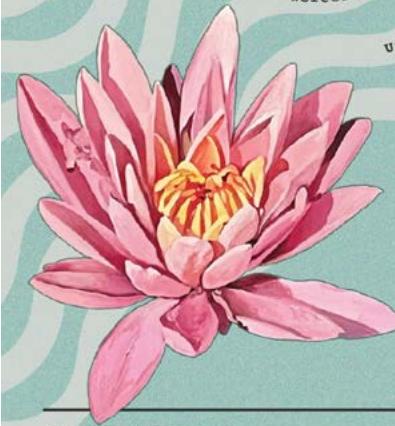
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Here's What You Should Do Now If You're a Queer Family in America

Despite disappointing election results, hope and help remain



BY DANA RUDOLPH

The election of Donald Trump to a second term as president feels like a body blow. The danger of his policies to LGBTQ+ and other marginalized people is real. Nevertheless, there are actions LGBTQ+ parents can take now to protect and support our families — and there are a few things that are giving me hope.

One thing LGBTQ+ parents should do immediately is make sure to have secure legal protections in place. This is especially important for nongestational and nongenetic parents, whose legal relationships with their children may still be called into question, even if they are married and on their children's birth certificates. Because of bias and discrimination, both married and unmarried LGBTQ+ parents are advised by LGBTQ+ legal experts to have the security of a court judgment, not just a birth certificate, to protect their child-parent relationships no matter where they may move or travel. Visit lgbtqparentage.org for a brief guide that GLAD Law and I created, which explains the options you may have and offers straightforward answers to common questions about securing your parentage. Learn about laws impacting parentage rights and surrogacy in Michigan [here](#).

Wills, powers of attorney and healthcare proxies are also critical for protecting LGBTQ+ families more broadly. For all of the above, it is important to get advice

from someone well-versed in LGBTQ+ family law in your specific state. If you need legal assistance, the National LGBTQ+ Bar Association maintains a Family Law Attorney Directory of experienced LGBTQ+ family law practitioners. Additionally, several major LGBTQ+ legal organizations, including GLAD Law, Lambda Legal, the National Center for Lesbian Rights and the Transgender Law Center, offer helplines that can address questions, provide attorney referrals and direct you further. You can easily find these resources via a quick online search.

Don't forget that you're not alone. We're facing this as a community. Whether in person or online, we can support each other and share both our challenges and joys. And every LGBTQ+, civil rights and reproductive rights organization I know is ready to assist, both in advocating for our rights and in connecting us with resources.

As parents, we can ourselves assist our kids (of relevant age) process their feelings around the election and what they may be hearing from peers, the news or online sources. We can listen to their concerns and remind them that when bullies win, the good people try harder; that change takes time, but we will always love and support them; and that we and they are part of a strong and vibrant LGBTQ+ community with a history of resilience and resistance.

See **Mombian**, page 27



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MSU Campus

Continued from page 6

not being big and bad and scary," he said. "They are coming to us, they're meeting us where we are and they're being kind and friendly and understanding of where we come from. [They're] hearing our issues and not directly canceling us out."

The Republican and Democratic parties run with two different sets of tactics, Lenz said.

"Democrats tend to actually organize events where Republicans tend to fear monger," he said.

"That is something that we have seen a lot even just today, on Election Day. I have not seen any Republican tables; I have not heard about them. But there are at least 10 to 15 Democratic tables out."

Lenz described seeing this differentiation in the canvassing process. "We had people yelling at us through the door when we were door knocking, or from their trucks and different vehicles on the street," he said. "We had one person call Kamala a slur. They feel comfortable doing this and this is their way to show who they represent. I think it really shows the difference between what these parties are like and what we stand for."

The MSU Dems' election night watch party was densely packed with students, which was only fitting for the nation's largest college Democrats chapter. Even State Rep. Julie Brixie made an appearance. However, as the night dragged on, a murmur began to spread through the crowd — the mood was uneasy. At that point in the night, states had begun to

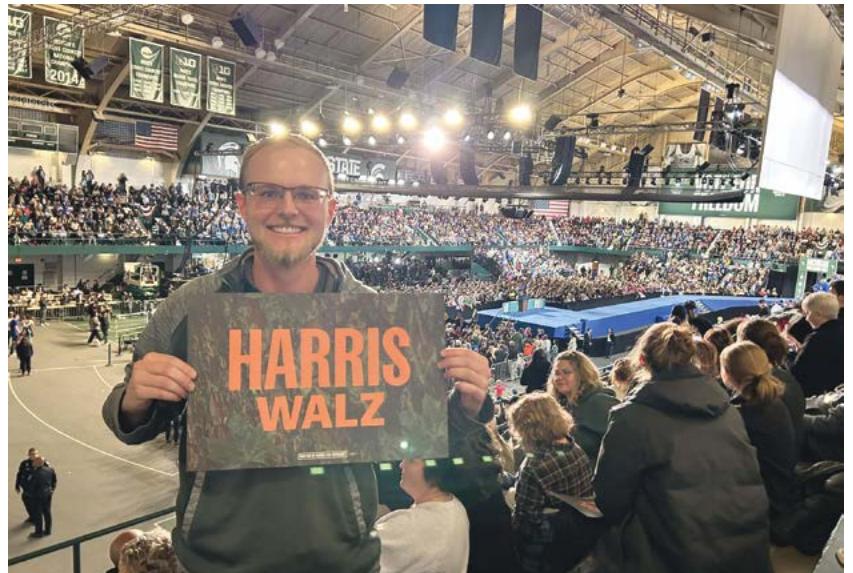


Voting center at MSU. Photo: Liam Clymer

swing red, but without all votes counted, there was still hope that it may have only been a red mirage.

"It's nerve-racking no matter what, you know, but I think our girl is gonna pull through," said Jade Holloway, an openly gay comparative cultures and politics sophomore and MSU Dems communications director.

Holloway noted that Harris had shown more of an effort to be a strong ally than other leading Democrats. "The Harris



Aaron Carten-Crandell. Courtesy photo

campaign has been more open in their acceptance when it comes to the youth queer vote," he said. "I feel like that's kind of something that comes with a Democratic campaign... [but] they've made it very abundantly clear that while it's kind of expected, in a sense, they still need to earn it. And I feel like they've definitely put in the work to earn that vote."

He specifically cited Harris' action taken as a San Francisco district attorney in performing some of the first same-sex marriages in California, in what was called the "San Francisco Winter of Love."

MSU Dems president and openly gay political theory senior Liam Richichi added that the campaign's emphasis on uplifting queer icons, such as Charli XCX and Troye Sivan, was also key in turning out youth voters.

Overall, the feelings on Election Day from youth LGBTQ+ voters were:

"Both scared and excited," Newman-Bale said.

"It's scary to think of the possibility of the future in which I have less rights than my grandmother did," Catella said.

"I'm scared for the future of this nation because we could go back in history," Lenz said. "History tends to repeat itself and we are seeing a repeat in history that I did not want to see again."

The aftermath

In the early morning of Nov. 6, Trump won re-election, dashing the hopes of many queer voters everywhere. But for young voters who may have turned out for the first time this election, it was difficult to wrap their heads around the results.

A campus that was bustling just one day before — overflowing with political action organizations on every corner — became eerily quiet. Some professors canceled classes, others abandoned lesson plans and had sitdown conversations with students.

There was a hushed feeling of defeat and hopelessness that washed over the campus — one only made more sharp by the carefree nature of some of the young men on campus whose grins said more than words.

But in the face of this loss, leading LGBTQ+ community leaders laid out how young queer voters can move forward.

Staff attorney for the ACLU of Michigan's LGBT Project Jay Kaplan said things can change and that this is a time for conversation.

"In any civil rights movement, you experience setbacks and I can only tell [young voters] that when we first started our project back in 2001, there was no marriage equality, you had these sodomy laws on the books that were enforceable and used to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people, we had very few local ordinances that provided for civil rights for protection — things can change and things can get better," he said. "My advice is we have to come together, we need to sit down and we need to have a very open, frank and productive conversation about where we go from here."

Equality Michigan Executive Director Erin Knott mirrored Kaplan's sentiments.

"My advice is to not give up," Knott said. "There are going to be setbacks — this is what a democracy looks like; we might not be happy with the outcome."

She added, "We need to organize. We need to come together as a community, continue to come together as a community. We need to identify ways in which we can continue having conversations with folks."

Those with children old enough can start (or continue) age-appropriate conversations about democracy,

there are more personal ways to make a difference as well, reaching out to those in our communities who may need assistance in navigating today's uncertain currents. We shouldn't try to do everything — but it is incumbent upon us to do something.

across the country. Notably, Sarah McBride (D-Delaware) was elected to the U.S. House, becoming the first out transgender person in Congress; Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin), who was the first out LGBTQ+ woman elected to Congress and then the first

out LGBTQ+ person elected to the Senate, won reelection; and Sharice Davids (D-Kansas), who was one of the first two Native Americans and the first out LGBTQ+ Native American elected to Congress, was reelected to the U.S. House.

Looking just at LGBTQ+ parents, more than three dozen of us won election or reelection around the country, including Becca Balint (D-Vermont) and Angie Craig (D-Minnesota), who were reelected to the U.S. House; Aime Wichtendahl (D-Iowa), who will become the first out transgender person to serve in Iowa's state legislature. LGBTQ+ parents even won state legislative seats in several

states that Trump won, and won city, county, judicial and school board seats in several states.

Our community still has a voice. We have our families, we have each other, and we'll get through this together. Sending you love and strength for the days ahead.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory for LGBTQ+ parents.

activism, social justice and more, helping the next generation of citizens develop core values and be informed and engaged.

We can also get involved with LGBTQ+ and other social justice organizations (on an ongoing basis or for individual events), volunteer for political campaigns (midterms will be here before we know it) and continue speaking out for our families in our neighborhoods, school board meetings and other local venues. And

It's OK to ask for help, too. At the very least, don't forget to take a break once in a while. Spend extra time in the park with your kids, or give them some extra screen time while you read a novel. If you don't have the luxury of spare time, do what you can to catch your breath — turn off the news and turn on some music while you commute or go to the grocery store, for example.

Remember, too, that there are sparks of hope. The election also saw many wins for LGBTQ+ candidates



Presidential Choice
Puzzle can be found on page 33

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Queer Quilting as Remembrance, Protest and Connection

These queer quilters' beautiful work reflect the many layers of our community



A square from the AIDS Memorial Quilt. Photo: aidsmemorial.org

BY ERYN JOHNSON SUNNOLIA

Grace Rother's latest quilt is very much in process: rich shades of green in the center, with small fabric houses framing the green, raw outside edges. She calls it HOMES.

"It's this feeling of having multiple homes and being forever long distance from somebody, always kind of homesick," Rother explains, referencing the homes that have shaped them across the Midwest: Southeast Michigan, where they lived until they were 25, then Chicago and now Milwaukee.

The quilt, like everything Rother makes,

is created from recycled fabrics — old clothes and sheets dropped off in bags by friends, fabrics mailed by pen pals, the textile detritus of their own life. With this project in particular, she wants to reflect home and the different homes she's made around the Great Lakes, a place she feels deeply connected to.

For her, a quilt feels like the perfect medium for exploring the idea of home. Associated with the domestic, quilts take up space in the places we sleep, eat and connect. We throw them over the backs of our couches, cover our beds and hang them on the walls over our kitchen tables.

Queer and trans individuals like Rother and Cody Cook-Parrott, who lives in Michigan, embrace the idea of home as a fluid and expansive concept. A quilt beautifully embodies this notion in textile form: distinct pieces come together to create something greater than the sum of its parts. Quilts offer care, warmth and love, often crafted collaboratively to foster connection, transformation, belonging and the sharing of queer stories.

As queer people, Rother and Cook-Parrott come from a tradition of quilting where this art form is a source of both connection and

protest. The most famous example is the AIDS Memorial Quilt, the largest community arts project in history.

According to the National AIDS Memorial website, the quilt was conceived of in 1985 by activist Cleve Jones. At that year's San Francisco march to honor Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone, both of whom were assassinated in 1978, Jones asked each of his fellow marchers to write the names of loved ones who had died of AIDS on placards. They taped the cards to the walls of the San Francisco Federal Building, and realized the wall of names looked like a patchwork quilt.

The quilt became a reality from there, spurred by a desire to not let history forget the ones they loved and to force the government to take action. It quickly became a public project, and thousands of quilt squares were sewed together. The blanket, which was larger than a football field, was first displayed on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. during the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1987. It was both a protest for dying LGBTQ+ people and a memorial in their honor.

"It's one of the most beautiful art projects in the world," Cook-Parrott says. "Activism and movement work is so important to me, and quilting feels like this perfect crossover point of everything I love. It's how I anchor in my queerness and anchor in myself. There's such a history of how we take care of each other through quilts."

Quilting can act as a site of connection to that lineage of queer love, care and protest, as well as to direct ancestors. Rother is under no illusion that the people in their family would have celebrated or even tolerated their queerness. But they can sit at their machine and do the same physical motions their quilting ancestors have done for generations. And they can wind bobbins, snip fabric and pin pieces of cotton together just like their queer ancestors who made the AIDS quilt did.

"There are these little points of connection that are especially important to me because, as a queer person, I don't have the same markers in my life that the rest of my family did," Rother says. "When I got married, it felt very different from straight weddings I've gone to. It's a very particular experience to engage in civil rights you didn't have before. And we're not going to have children as far as I know. So a lot of the traditional markers, where you might feel your ancestors, aren't there for us."

Quilting also just feels intrinsically tied to their queerness, in part because at the same time they were sewing together random scraps of fabric in their parents' basement in Ann Arbor as a young teenager, they were combing through the library for every gay book they could find. In an art-making practice that traditionally involves many rulers and rules, both Rother and Cook-Parrott embrace bending and breaking those rules to make something your own.

"I think queerness exists because people have said there's one right way to do something and being queer is a deviation from that. I very much approach quilting in the same way," Rother says. "When you deviate from that, you start to be able to express yourself and say who you are with a

quilt. I think that being queer has given me the ability to say, oh, there's always another way of looking at this because I come to the world that way."

"Improvisational quilting specifically is about beginning to be outside the lines," Cook-Parrott says. That's the way they first learned to quilt, at a workshop taught by Eliza Fernand at their former Have Company space in Grand Rapids. At the time, they were a dancer longing for a practice that would create something tangible. Dancing was ephemeral; translating that language to textiles and making a functional object was a powerful breakthrough. After top surgery and changing their name and pronouns, they connect their trans experience of living outside the lines to their quilting practice.

"My literal scars remind me of the seams



Grace Rother with one of their quilting projects. Courtesy photo

of a quilt and stitching myself back together. I think that's part of a trans and gender expansive experience, whether it's playing with our hair, our hormones, our clothing or our haircuts," they say. "It's all these arrangements of the self and putting them back together. I love that gender and quilting are kind of the exact same thing in that way."

To further put a queer spin on the artform, Cook-Parrott's approach to quilting embraces imperfection. "I think improvisational quilting is inherently queer in the way that it's outside the lines of structure," they say. It's funny to them that the word for "perfect" in quilting is "straight": straight lines, straight edges. "It's embedded in the language, and it reminds me of being gay and non-binary and living outside of straightness in my life," they say. "I don't have the option to have the lines match up in the way society wants them

See **Quilting**, page 36

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Why Filmmaker Tom E. Brown Has Brought His Life and Work to Detroit, 40 Years After AIDS Diagnosis

Brown's 'Pushing Dead' set for free screening at Senate Theater for World AIDS Day

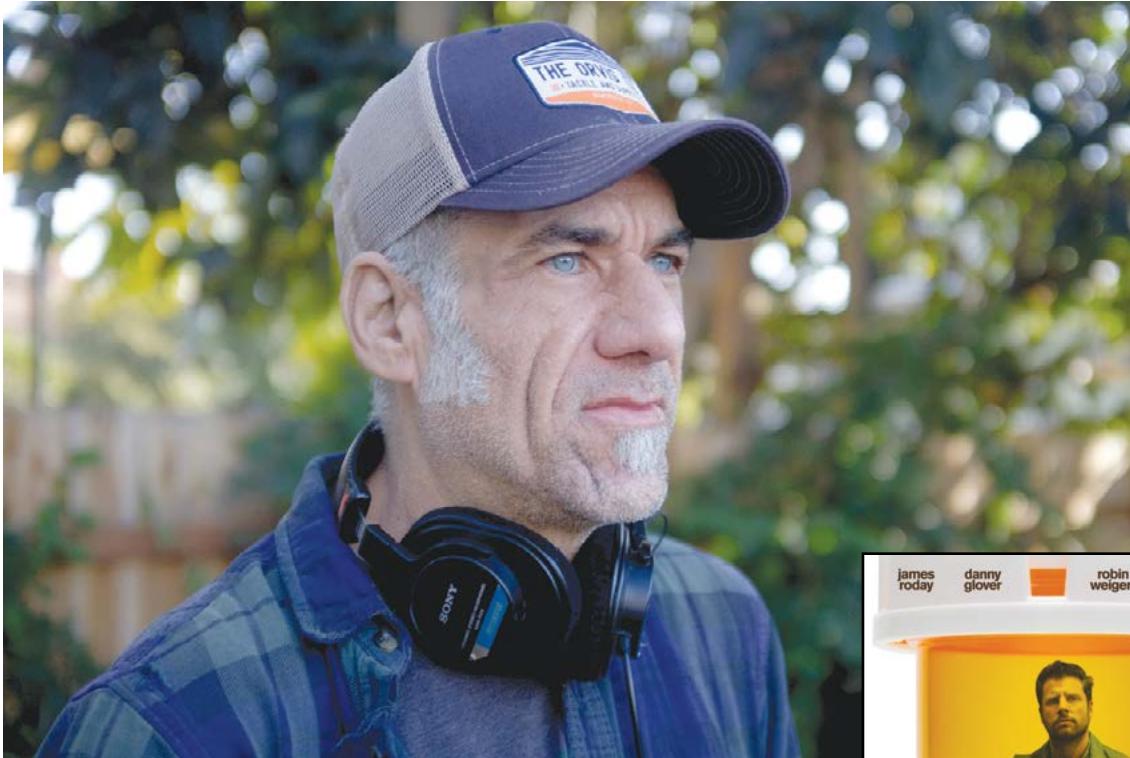
BY GEORGE ELKIND

When Tom E. Brown was just 18, he was told his days were numbered. Over the phone, in a conversation as abrupt as it was devastating, his doctor informed him that he had been diagnosed with AIDS. Based on the test results, he was given a grim prognosis: a life expectancy of just three weeks to three months. That was 40 years ago. Recalling his reaction to the news, Brown acknowledged that simply hearing this at a young age "messes with your wiring."

Today, Brown, who since has gone on to become a filmmaker, nods to a process — and not a simple one — of learning to treat his condition less as a battle and more as something to "settle into a comfortable relationship with." What was then a doctor's dire prognosis is now, thanks to advances in medicine, regarded more often by both members of the LGBTQ+ community and providers as a status to know and closely monitor — but not despair over.

While this coping strategy has certainly leavened Brown's outlook, he describes mortality as presenting, quite understandably, a source of ongoing fascination. At this point, its specter rarely rattles him. But there are exceptions, as with the loss of his beloved dog just months ago, who Brown sweetly refers to as his "four-legged soulmate."

"I've always had this thing where I feel like I can handle death better than most. But when my pooch died, I was like, 'Oh, no, I... I can't!' So I needed a big change," Brown remarks. "I'd been in San Francisco for 30 years, and I wanted to participate in a smaller film community and see if in some way I can help to strengthen the [arts] community here. So that's my plan."



Tom E. Brown. Courtesy photo

By any metric, Brown is already hitting the ground running. He organized a screening of his 2016 feature film "Pushing Dead" for World AIDS Day on Dec. 1 at Detroit's Senate Theater: a scrappy, volunteer-run space in Southwest Detroit that he reports responded happily and immediately to his inquiry about hosting the event.

Through swift action to collaborate with not only the Senate but Affirmations, Cinema Lamont and the Ruth Ellis Center — all partners in the event — so quickly after moving here, Brown's investment in finding and building community is clear. Despite the move and its challenges, he seems eager yet calm, showing little anxiety about leaping across the country to establish his artistic footprint in Detroit. Brown's even gone so far as to buy a house here, having visited the area just once

beforehand. He also plans to shoot "American Dog" — a film starring Margaret Cho as a lesbian cop, with Joel McHale and Robin Weigert also attached — over the coming months, and possibly in Metro Detroit. (Financing films has grown more difficult over the last decade's streaming boom, and sorting a production budget without the state's long-standing film incentives has proven a struggle).

"I like the idea of jumping into something new without knowing a ton," Brown observes of his recent move. "It's kind of like a movie; I don't want to know much about the narrative, because it's much more fun to see a movie. So I've started my adventure [here in Detroit] without a lot of knowledge."

Some portion of that comfort likely stems not just from Brown's time touring with his work ("Pushing Dead" played,

And Brown seems to have had little trouble becoming quickly acquainted with Detroit.

"It's sprawling, but — I was chatting with a DJ last night — most of the people that I've met in the arts and filmmaking community, everybody knows everybody," Brown notes. "He [the DJ] knew the person I had reached out to at Soho to promote the World AIDS Day screening. So it seems like the active members of the arts community know each other, and I'm excited to learn more and hopefully be a part of that community."

"Pushing Dead" displays this same clear investment in the strength of local community. Unfolding as a not-quite-bildungsroman, the film follows Dan, an HIV-positive writer who's managed his own experience with HIV for decades while scraping by in San Francisco. When confronted with an unexpected disruption in insurance coverage, Dan finds himself forced to choose between an avalanche of staggering prescription bills or considerable risk to his own health. But this doesn't play like a Ken Loach film; for one thing, actor James Roday manages to imbue the role with a charming-but-prickly

half-cynical air, even as he swings from hope to various forms of coping and resignation to moments of being visibly frightened and overwhelmed.

While this might sound weighty,



according to his count, at least 80 film festivals, granting him an easy facility with getting to know new crowds). But it owes as much, surely, to the ability of both artists and queer people — especially in small and mid-size cities — to bank on their communities as sources of support, even as new arrivals.

See **Tom Brown**, page 34

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► Palmer Woods

Continued from page 22

apartments, unlike Chicago and New York," Retzloff said.

"So certainly for free, young gay people coming out, there's a strong appeal. That's part of the reason for the [LGBTQ+] concentration [in the Palmer Park apartment district]."

Retzloff explained that many LGBTQ+ individuals who moved to the architecturally rich Palmer Woods had much to do with the growth of Detroit and the flow of capital to newly established suburbs further out, comparing it to similar dynamics at play in historic Detroit neighborhoods such as Indian Village and Boston-Edison.

"In all three of these instances, in Indian village, in Boston-Edison and then in Palmer Woods, I think as the demographics of the city are changing and as capital is leaving the city, these homes become affordable," Retzloff said. "Certainly among gay men, there's often this attraction to architecture and rehabilitating homes that plays into it. That's my sense of Palmer Woods being another phase of this movement."

In the present day, Palmer Woods Board and Holiday Home Tour committee member Joshua Ronnebaum describes the Palmer Woods neighborhood as embodying a "culture of openness," with a strong and enduring LGBTQ+ presence.

He said that the connection between LGBTQ+ identity and the beautification and maintenance of Palmer Woods properties has much to do with aligned values.

"There's a sense that everyone in Palmer Woods has a commitment to the preservation of their homes and they understand what that means for other people as well," Ronnebaum said. "People want to make the community better, make Detroit better — both in terms of architectural contributions and in terms of cultural contributions. I think that connects to the LGBTQ+ community because there are a lot of synergies between areas where the LGBTQ+ community focuses, such as arts and cultural contributions, that have great synergy with the interests of the residents of Palmer Woods."

Similarly, Ronnebaum said that LGBTQ+ individuals have a unique understanding of why it's important to give back to the Palmer Woods community through the Holiday Home Tour.

"A lot of our work goes to improving the community, but we also donate a portion of our sales to local charities," he said. "In addition to this aspect of cultural preservation and architectural preservation, there's a philanthropic aspect as well, which I think gets back to the interests of the LGBTQ+ community because we are a community that understands

the value of giving back."

Trevor Thomas, a Palmer Woods resident and owner of the Rose Estate (the former home of Detroit icon Aretha Franklin), expressed his honor in contributing to the rich tapestry of LGBTQ+ activism that shapes Detroit's identity. Thomas will be hosting this year's post-tour, continuing the legacy started by former Palmer Woods Board member Dale Morgan, who hosted the first soirée.

"I love Detroit's vibrant and fully engaged LGBTQ+ community," he said. "We see it in the Palmer Woods area, but the truth is, we see it in neighborhoods and burrows and little communities throughout the city and region of Detroit. It's what makes Detroit strong as a city. I'm excited to be a part of it, and if we can host an event like this [soirée], which is benefiting Palmer Park and Palmer Woods, it's a step in the right direction to ensuring that it [the history



The Rose Estate. Photo: Chris Ahern

of the Palmer Park area] can be enjoyed for generations to come."

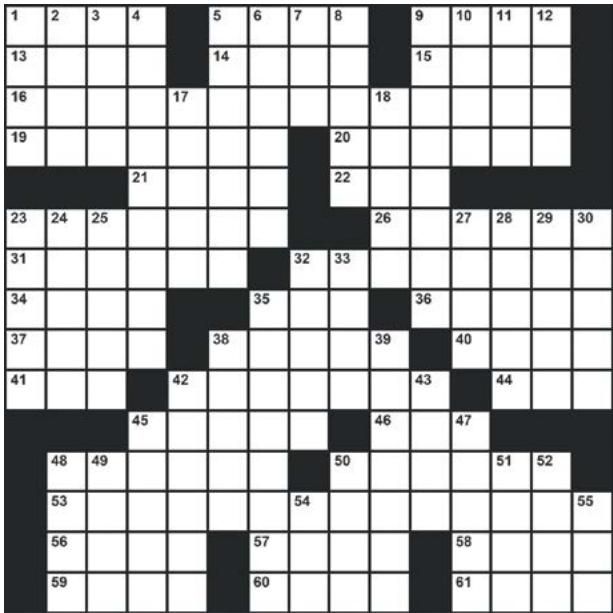
Thomas acknowledged that it takes an army to maintain the property and transform the Rose estate into a winter wonderland for the soirée. There are many LGBTQ+ leaders behind the scenes who have shown incredible support, and the home itself wouldn't be in the perfectly preserved condition it's in without the work of Detroit icons.

"Our pride and joy when we arrive at the house every day is that Miss Franklin and Miss Burnett chose to maintain and keep not only the slate roof, but many of the original features — nearly 90% of the home is still as it was in 1927; that is rare and extraordinary," Thomas said. "Little do people know they should have the title of preservationist because they contributed greatly to being able to preserve the home."

Community members can see the stunningly original red oak hardwood floors, ruby red bathtub and gold-gilded French sconces for themselves on Dec. 7.

In honor of the preservationist and Queen of Soul herself, Aretha Franklin, the soirée's evening entertainment will feature a tasteful blend of Franklin's music, other jazz numbers and holiday classics. Tickets also include access to a gourmet catered menu with a variety of meal and drink options.

[Visit palmerwoods.org for tickets.](http://palmerwoods.org)



Across

Presidential Choice

- 1 Erection, in slang
- 5 Former Trump portrayer
- Baldwin
- 9 Load of money
- 13 Fruit of the ___
- 14 Room for Frida

- 15 Rainbow, to some
- 16 Start of a quote from Randy Rainbow's "The Lawyer or the Conman"
- 19 Cinnamon trees
- 20 Kicks out to the street
- 21 It makes watching porn harder
- 22 Real babe
- 23 More of the quote
- 26 Broadway request for Kate
- 31 "The Bathers" painter
- 32 More of the quote
- 34 Muscle Marys pump it

- 35 Prefix with political
- 36 "Faboo!"
- 37 Where one sleeps with
privates
- 38 Chicken coop raiders
- 40 Asked for on bended knee
- 41 Tin Woodsman's tool
- 42 More of the quote
- 44 Threesome for Michelangelo
- 45 Brings on
- 46 London label
- 48 Condition of affairs
- 50 Didn't skip
- 53 End of the quote
- 56 What a boy scout takes
- 57 Like love, for some
- 58 Goes down on
- 59 Parker of "South Park"
- 60 Mind the bar
- 61 Animal groups that cruised
with Noah

Down

- 1 Voting group
- 2 Sometime Capote associate
- 3 Chaplin
- 4 Naysayers' words
- 5 Nocturnal releases
- 6 Ore analyst
- 7 Returns to homophobia, e.g.
- 7 Thornton Wilder, for one
- 8 Insertion indicator
- 9 How lovers lie
- 10 Apple that isn't a fruit
- 11 Fasting time
- 12 "All's Well That ____ Well"
- 17 Capone colleague
- 18 Cause to come out

- 23 Susan in "All My Children"
- 24 Big name in nonheterosexual reproducing
- 25 100 smackers
- 27 "Brady Bunch" prefix
- 28 Auxiliary to King James
- 29 Online stat exaggeration?
- 30 Lose ground
- 32 Sends a selfie, for example
- 33 Gardening tools for prostitutes?
- 35 Become less able to penetrate
- 38 Egyptian king until 1952
- 39 Took the wheel
- 42 The Eagles' "____ Woman"
- 43 Potent leader?
- 45 Like Beard's cuisine
- 47 "Does ____ any better than this?"
- 48 Dundee denizen
- 49 "____ she blows!"
- 50 Little chirper
- 51 My little project

See p. 27 for answers



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• Tom Brown

Continued from page 30

the film is both leavened and deepened by the fact Dan's story isn't the only one it aims to tell. The movie's world is realized by a vivid cast of supporting characters, each working from a tonal palette that seems to reflect Brown's level, good-humored outlook — and his sense of proportion.

"That's just the way I write. I start to fall in love with every character, and so I want to give each character a story or an arc," says Brown of the film's ensemble approach. "Not to give away any spoilers, but there's a mugger and he's got a bit of an arc. [Even with] these small characters, you get to see a little change in them."

Most prominently,

the film features Robin Wiegert as Paula, Dan's close friend, aiming to support him while working through struggles of her own in her personal life. (While most famous for playing Calamity Jane in "Deadwood," readers may know Wiegert better for her firm, indelible and nuanced performance in various therapy scenes opposite Nicole Kidman in "Big Little Lies"). Here, Wiegert is granted the space to be buoyant, to act "bigger" — and she does a great deal with a challenging, often off-kilter comic role. (Brown notes that Wiegert will be present for a Q&A at the Dec. 1 Senate Theater screening, in addition to starring in "American Dog").

She's joined, too, by the tireless actor-producer Danny Glover, a staunch supporter of

both independent film and LGBTQ+ rights. Brown met Glover prior to shooting near the head

marital struggles with his wife Dot (played gamely by Khandi Alexander).

In surrounding Dan

"The wonderful thing for me as a filmmaker was to see that people appreciated it in these small backwater towns in the same way that they appreciated it in New York or San Francisco. ... It felt like it was actually bringing people together. "

of a San Francisco Equal Rights March. Here, Glover plays Bob, Dan's friend and boss, with characteristic warmth — even as he works through

with a vivid cast of supporting characters, though — all on

See Tom Brown, page 38



The Senate Theater marquee featuring "Pushing Dead." Courtesy photo

• Gift Guide

Continued from page 20

mocktails, NA spirits and NA wines. This gift set features five single-serving mixers to create your own mojito, salted paloma, hurricane, lemon drop and bloody Mary at home — just add NA spirits and club soda!

Queer-owned small business gifts

'Queer Joy Is an Act of Resistance' T-shirt

Support the incredible team at Transfigure Print Co. in Grand Rapids and a life-changing youth program with a t-shirt beaming with love and light — and a dash of defiance. The super charming t-shirt design, featuring the slogan "Brave Trails: Queer Joy Is an Act of Resistance" features a picture-perfect summer camp scene your gift recipient will love wearing year-round, with imagery of a mountain, trees, birds and a cheerful image of the sun. The project is a collab between LGBTQ+ youth leadership camp Brave Trails, modern art phenom Lisa Congdon and Transfigure with 20% of proceeds going back to the Brave Trails community.

A gift certificate for (permanent) art

Know someone that just needs that little push (or the funds) to get that tattoo they've been wanting? Consider a gift certificate to a local tattoo shop like My Little Needle Tattoos (Plymouth), Clove Tattoo Co. (Grand Rapids), Heirloom Arts Tattoo (Kalamazoo) and Rat King Tattoo (Detroit) — all tattoo shops that outwardly express their pride in making safe, inclusive experiences for their clients.



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Quilting

Continued from page 29

to. It just doesn't fit."

Making a quilt begins with assembling the fabrics that will eventually be woven together to make the quilt top. Cook-Parrott tries not to put too much pressure on the beginning stages, because they can always pivot and change. "Starting is so often the hardest part," they say. "I just try to grab things I like."

Rother's HOMES quilt began from wanting to piece together a lot of nice green linen they already had. When they did, it looked like an expanse of grass, like the park across from their house growing up. That inspired the houses they began to sew. The quilt is a series of fabrics, disparate pieces of textile collected from their own life and from the people with whom their life is intertwined, brought together to eventually create something comforting and whole.

Both artists are telling stories of living as

queer people in the Midwest. For Cook-Parrott, who grew up in Michigan, left for years, and has returned to a small rural town in the northern part of the state where there aren't a lot of queer people or even people their age, their practice is shaped by the leisurely pace of their life in this place and the intergenerational nature of their community.

"The lake and my swimming practice and my hiking practice with my dog all inform the slowness, too," Cook-Parrott says. "Quilting is just such a beautiful way to honor tradition and birth and death and life and love."

Rother has a much deeper relationship with regional quilt-making practices in the Midwest than the specifics of their ancestral quilt-making practices.

"The Midwest has this whole tradition of Amish quilts that I feel really drawn to," they say. "They're in response to the landscape and they are these abstracted depictions of the land and loving the land and the beauty of the area around us. I'm totally biased, but I think the Midwest is the most beautiful place in the world."



Grace Rother's HOMES quilt, in progress. Courtesy photo

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• **Tom Brown**
Continued from page 34

trajectories Brown considers closely linked — “Pushing Dead” sidesteps the quasi-religious, agonistic focus on individual suffering typical of so many HIV depictions. Instead, it’s framed as one of many ongoing struggles a person — of any orientation or gender experience — might confront and hope to find a way of coping with in their day-to-day living. The result is a careful balancing act, examining how Dan’s burdens play out alongside his friends’ ones — situating them all in relation to each other while sapping none of them of their sense of weight.

But in a quite deliberate way, that balance always feels a little tenuous. Vivid dream sequences with gothic overtones (and effects work from the celebrated Phil Tippett) lend a fantastical quality to Dan’s experience of harsh bureaucratic, romantic and health-related realities — as they do, too, to Paula’s parallel romantic struggles. Frazer Bradshaw’s dusky cinematography lends shading to the film’s tone and overall sense of warmth.

When asked why he wants to share the film now — a plan that began before we knew this year’s election outcomes — Brown suggested that the film and the dialogue it hopes to engender would be “needed” and

important to share, whatever the result. It would be important, he felt, not only to further a conversation around experiences with HIV, but also to share a film with a gay protagonist he considers “accessible” to people from all walks of life. That hope for dialogue is rooted not in wishful thinking but in his own extensive experience of traveling with and showing the film.

“We took this film to small towns in Kentucky and Louisiana and it was kind of amazing. The wonderful thing for me as a filmmaker was to see that people appreciated it in these small backwater towns in the same way that they appreciated it in New York or San Francisco,” he says. “We did some small towns in Florida and it felt like it was actually bringing people together.”

“It’s nice for me because World AIDS Day was started as a Day Without Art,” he goes on. “It’s now morphed into a day where someone like me had an AIDS diagnosis when I was a teenager, and I’m [now] about to celebrate 40 years — it’s nice that people like me are still alive and showing art.”

“Pushing Dead” will play for one night at the Senate Theater at 6424 Michigan Ave., Detroit. Doors, concession and a bar open at 5:30 p.m. and the screening begins at 6:30 p.m., followed by a 8:20 Q&A with Tom Brown and Robin Wiegert. Admission to the event is free.

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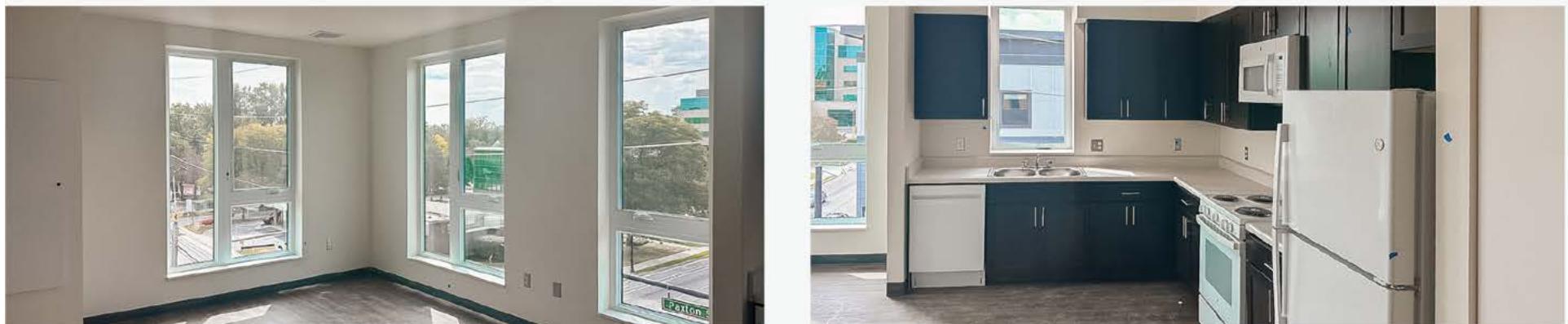
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